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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Sorghum, Molasses, and Other Iron-rich Foods

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★ OCT 28 1936 ★

U. S. Department of Agriculture

A radio talk by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, October 1, 1936.

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MR. SALISBURY: Once again your friend, Miss Van Deman, is here to keep her regular Thursday date with the women of this audience. Ruth, are you going to tell us today about another home economics bulletin hot off the press?

MISS VAN DEMAN: No, I'm sorry, we can't turn out a brand new bulletin every week. But speaking of that one on "Diets to fit the family income", I think we're going to have to order a reprint of it very soon, the way people are asking for it. And apparently the home canning season hasn't closed yet. Miss Smith, who opens the mail for us, tells me we've had nearly two thousand letters asking for the new canning bulletin. Lots of you farm homemakers, I know, are canning chicken now and getting ready to can meat this winter. Naturally you want the latest recommendations on processing times and temperatures. Well, they're in that bulletin in a condensed timetable and in more detailed directions catalogued under beef, lamb, chicken, and so down the list. Miss Stienbarger has done the experimental work and the results are yours to use if your wish.

Now today I'm going to answer a request that came from a Farm and Home Hour friend in Nebraska -- in Omaha, to be exact.

"I wish you'd talk about molasses some day", she wrote. "I'd like to know whether sorghum contains the same amount of iron as molasses".

That's a very good question and a timely one. At least it's timely to me, because ever since I spent a fall out on my uncle's farm in Kansas I've associated sorghum with this time of year. He grew the cane on his place, and took it to a local press, and had the sweet juice squeezed out and boiled down into the rich brown sirup.

MR. SALISBURY: You could smell the aroma from that sorghum mill a half mile away.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Maybe it's just the fond memories of childhood, but it seems to me there never were such cookies as those, sweetened with that sorghum.

Now, turning to the scientific record on sorghum and molasses, I'm glad to report that they are equally good as sources of iron. Both molasses and sorghum are iron-rich foods. And they are also calcium-rich foods.

Maybe some of you Mississippi listeners have seen the report by Miss Olive Sheets and her associates of an excellent piece of research on this very

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question. They set out to find exactly how much iron and calcium is contained in the kinds of molasses and other sirups people are using in the United States today. They analyzed scores of samples. What I've told you about the sorghum and molasses is based on their work and it checks with the analyses done on a smaller scale in other laboratories.

Of course, molasses and sorghum are only two of the many foods rich in iron. I have here a list compiled by Miss Chatfield and her coworkers in our Food Composition Section. They spend all their time combing the scientific literature for reports of food analyses, so they can have the answers at their finger tips when somebody like you or me comes along and wants to know just what foods to eat to keep our red blood cells flourishing. Or maybe we're already over on the anemic side. Maybe the doctor has made a blood count and found that the red and the white corpuscles were already out of their proper ratio.

It's one of the paradoxes of modern American eating habits, that here with a great abundance of common foods, and oftentimes cheap foods, rich in iron, and in calcium, so many of us should be down near a bare subsistence level, so far as these two food elements are concerned in our diet.

Maybe it's only circumstance, but this last year I've met ever so many people, young college girls as well as older people, who are fighting anemia and having to take iron in massive doses. Maybe more attention to diet earlier would have forestalled all that.

Of course, the chemistry of nutrition is a very complex matter. It isn't always just a question of swallowing plenty of certain foods. The organs and glands have to be in the right condition to receive and assimilate the food substances. And sometimes conditions other than those connected with diet get our apparatus out of kilter. But if the getting out of kilter is due to inadequate diet, and we keep on eating that kind of a diet, then we are in a vicious circle.

All this may seem rather far afield from the iron in sorghum and molasses. It isn't though. Because definite facts like that about all the foods that come our way help us to pick a diet that contains what the body needs to keep it in top condition.

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